INTERVIEW WITH DR. VIRLING KERSEY

May 24, 1976

Conducted by:

Dr. James L. Dodson

- -and- -

Mrs. Karen Sheridan

Dodson: We're about to interview Dr. Virling Kersey who was the first President of Valley College. Dr. Kersey was President of the college from 1949 to 1955, I think it was. Wasn't it, Dr. Kersey?

Kersey: Yes.

Dodson: And besides that, Dr. Kersey is a long time resident of the valley. He has also been State Superintendent of Public Instruction and Superintendent of Schools here in Los Angeles. Dr. Kersey, you were telling us something about the construction of the San Pedro breakwater.

Kersey: That's right.

Dodson: Would you tell us about that stone that you say came from the valley? Most of us didn't know that the valley had any connection with that.

Kersey: Well, uh, the San Pedro breakwater was, uh, the result of a great deal of promotion and political Hoo Hoo development in Washington to get the harbor developed at San Pedro. There was a harbor, of course, at San Diego. There was a harbor at Monterey. There was a harbor at San Francisco, but there wasn't any at Los Angeles and Los Angeles was about to have a harbor made here and in order to do that, it was necessary to build an arm around that's, I think it is, three miles long. And that is all built out of large stone. Those stones came from Chatsworth. We used to go up there on the train. That is, the people who were operating that particular shift of the train, would allow us to ride up there. We'd ride up on the empty flat cars and they would put the stones on at Chatsworth then we would ride down to San Pedro and have the fun of standing by while the cars were unloaded or tipped up so that the stones slid off.

Dodson: Was that on the Pacific Electric then that you rode on?

Kersey: On, no. No. This was the Southern Pacific.

Dodson: I see.

Kersey: That was the Southern Pacific. The Pacific Electric was not in the valley at that time.

Dodson: I see. Do you recall when it did come into the valley for the first time?

Kersey: Well, I can recall some of the incidences that happened in those early days. The Van Nuys development, which was the result of incorporation of the city, or the community of Van Nuys, which never become a city of Van Nuys at that time and the residents, who were all agricultural people, had the opportunity to get Mr. Otis, of the Los Angeles Times and a number of other people who were then residents of the valley, farmers, to agitate to have the city of Van Nuys at least named and established as a community. That's about as near as I can remember its birthright or its starting. Then it did grow to be quite a rapidly developing community and the next event in its life was the arrival of the Red Cars. The Pacific Electric Railroad.

Dodson: Was that a subsidiary of Southern Pacific at that time?

Kersey: Well, it always was a subsidiary of the Southern Pacific. The Southern Pacific Railroad Company had all of the Red Car and I believe that they had a number of the branches of the electric railroad here. At any rate, the Southern Pacific brought the Pacific Electric into Van Nuys. I don't suppose we should say the Southern Pacific brought the Red Cars into Van Nuys but the Southern Pacific financed that. In reality the development of that part of Van Nuys was the foundation of the Metropolitan Water District. It came along in connection with, I presume you must have a great of material, there were quite a number of pamphlets that were issued in connection with that.

Dodson: Were you personally acquainted with Mr. Mulholland by any chance?

Kersey: Yes, I was. In fact, I was one of the members of the committee that agitated and developed to get the Mulholland Fountain down at the corner of, you know where it is down there. Where you come down from, the names don't come to my mind now. You come down Los Feliz.

Dodson: Oh, yes. Los Feliz and Riverside Drive.

Kersey: Yeah. I was there and spoke at the dedication of that and I was only, really, a kid at that time.

Dodson: I see. We've mentioned Van Nuys. Were you acquainted with any member of the Van Nuys family?

Kersey: Well, that's a difficult question to answer. There were many Van Nuys'. Several Van Nuys families. In fact, I don't know. I was a young fellow. Larry Van Nuys who came to this college and who was a broadcaster, he was one of the members of the Van Nuys family. Now, just how early he had connections or how he was part of that bloodstream, I don't know. I knew him, having met him here as a student.

Dodson: The question I had in mind was the direct descendants of Issac Newton Van Nuys, the first member of the family to come down here, whether you knew any of the immediate family?

Kersey: No, I didn't know any of them.

Dodson: I see. How long have you lived in the valley, Dr. Kersey?

Kersey: Well, I came to the valley permanently as a resident here when I left the office of State Superintendent in Sacramento. Since 1937. In 1937, I was up there from 1929 to 1937 as State Superintendent. Then I came down here as City Superintendent in 1937 and we moved here in 1949 when we established the college.

Dodson: Would you have been a resident of some other part of Los Angeles before you became State Superintendent?

Kersey: Oh, yes. Yes. I was born in what used to be Coal Grove, which was the eastern section of Hollywood. On what was then Broadview Avenue [spelling ?], which is now Sunset Boulevard. That was in Eighteen Hundred and Ninety. You can figure that that was within historical record.

Dodson: Did you come out here as a boy and see this valley at times?

Kersey: Yes, I did.

Dodson: Could you tell us what it looked like?

Kersey: We used to come out here and hunt quail and rabbit and, once in awhile, we would be able to shoot some ducks down at Toluca Lake, which was the town of Toluca in those days. We came out here then but that was after we had automobiles in our family, which was after 1911. Very few families had automobiles. The trip over the pass was quite a trip for an automobile in those days. In 1911.

Dodson: Can you tell us how this college came to be founded, Dr. Kersey? And how your connection with it developed?

Kersey: Well, ohm, my interest in this college was part of my own personal desire to see the Los Angeles City school system become a representative service through the different stages of life here in this community. That included all this area of the county. I was interested in having the development in the valley because it was the growing section. It was the only area that permitted Los Angeles city to really grow. In order to grow, you couldn't expect it to grow unless you had schools, and so, at that time, there were, and I had just been through the activities in Sacramento where one of the main functions that involved me was the junior college program for the State of California, and at that time there were about 18 junior colleges in California. So, the thought was, if we really served the people here they had to have something more than junior high schools, which they had none of, and high schools, which they had Van Nuys. Something that would permit people to get an education and stay here if they wanted to in the agricultural program. So, we thought that we oughtta have educational services here that would tie up with agriculture. While Valley was never an agricultural school, it was a fore-runner to Pierce College which was an agricultural school and Valley was a preliminary academic and pre-collegiate institution. The people out here were all very substantial people in terms of their belief and faith in education. So, we just got ourselves together and said we oughtta have a school here. One of the groups of people who

were especially interested here, and you don't need to think that this is promotion, was the Masonic group. The valley is a strong Masonic center even to this day. Some of the most rapidly growing lodges, now, are right here in the valley. All of these people, Mendenhall and Whitsett and Weddington and many others were Masons. So, we talked to them and at that time too, the Masonic organizations were growing rapidly in its public school program for its school week. The Masonic public schools, which, by the way, is still on for May, as it has been always, and of which I was the head in the State of California for something like 25 years. We developed an interest here in drawing together those people who are interested in cultural growth in the valley. There wasn't anything cultural in the valley until we really got this college.

Dodson: So, this college followed an academic line rather than the agricultural line of Pierce?

Kersey: This college followed that although it was very friendly toward the purpose that we had in mind that we would have an academic/agricultural college which would be Pierce, and we might have even an industrial junior college in days, but t that has never come. Now, that was just the way we talked about it and the way we did our community work here but, I will say this, as far as Valley was concerned we never sowed a seed as to what Valley oughtta be that it didn't sprout and grow lustily. Right away!

Dodson: And you had a great deal to do with that yourself I am able to testify.

Kersey: May be. I was for it. People followed right along. I can tell you the reaction of individuals about that. "What can we do to help you?" That was the community attitude when this school was established. Nobody fought it. Nobody fussed until the question of where the new site would be located.

Dodson: Yes, I was going to ask you about that. That was the only opposition we ran into, I think. That site problem.

Kersey: That's right. That was after I left.

Dodson: Well, there was a question wasn't there as to whether the site would be in the area of Magnolia and Woodman?

Kersey: Oh, yeah. Yeah, that was the one that I favored. There, and the man who was the attorney there, he's now dead, was so anxious to have us put the college there. That was a beautiful location.

Dodson: I think I discovered that all the Chambers of Commerce here in the valley favored that site.

Kersey: They did. Yes. Well, of course, think of the things that we had to go through here to get this. Still, to get streets closed; to get floods drained off; to get the railroad to cooperate.

Dodson: It's a surprise to many of our students to discover that this wasn't our first choice or first site. Can you tell us why you gave up going to the original selection?

Kersey: I wasn't, I didn't have anything to do with this selection, uh, finally. I, you see, that all happened after I retired or after I gave up being any part of the college here. To really move over here and develop, uh, get all this land, we did have, I don't know what you'd call it; an assemblage of bungalows.

Dodson: Yes. In fact, we're recording from one of those bungalows right now. This is the old Administration building. Now, we call it Bungalow 15, and I'm hoping to have the name changed to the Museum and get rid of that Bungalow 15.

Kersey: I don't know. Maybe this isn't a part of our interview today but what is the relationship between the Museum and some other title? Does every college look forward to having a museum someday?

Dodson: Many of them do, yes. And we felt that this central section of Van Nuys, particularly, had no place which was collecting materials on the history of the valley or saving the archives. .

Kersey: [Interrupting] NO! I'm talking about the WORD museum.

Dodson: The word itself, I think, goes back about 25 hundred years. "The House of the Muses," in Alexandria. The Museum. House of the Muses. So, that's where the word comes from, but I think many colleges, yes, are establishing museums of one kind or another, but we may be the first ones in the city system, really, to do this. Harbor, I think, has one room set aside in their library, but we have done one thing that I think really is an innovation and I'm sure you'll approve of it. We have formed a corporation chartered by the laws of California with a combination of directors chosen from the community and the students and the faculty. To really integrate the three pushing this museum. Dr. Kersey I think you may like to say something about Mr. Coultas and Mrs. Royer, who were your first two assistants in starting this community. How did you happen to choose them?

Kersey: First of all, Mr. Coultas because he had returned from the service. He had been in the service, uh, military. In the navy. So, he was interested in getting back into the school system, getting a job. I had known Mr. Coultas' father, who was an active Mason in Ventura County, who had done so much to help the schools up there, that I just talked to his Dad and asked him what he thought about Walt as a person to work with, and so on and so forth. May be a father would always be for his son. Certainly, I would be. He told me. He told me of Walt's activities. Walt had also been very active in that farm that they had up in northern California. So, I talked to Walter Coultas and I asked him whether he would, not knowing anything about whether he had any background or not, whether he would be willing to make a study of the various curricula of the junior college program that was developing in metropolitan areas in the state of California. At that time there were junior colleges developing in Fresno, Santa Barbara, and up in Salinas. I can't name all of the areas but we just studied that program of offering what they were making and decided we would make a selection for our curriculum out of that. And the most demanding area for the growth of educational service in the valley seemed to be

in the academic field. What do I mean by that? First of all, mathematics. That was the first main field that was well thought of. Then, you next had to deal with history. Then, the, we came along to english. The languages, and so on. That gave us a core. We started out with those four fields, mathematics, and we had some science but that was attached to the high school of Van Nuys at that time. That was the first, uh, pattern that we offered when we opened up with our 59 or 70 students.

Dodson: Yes, I remember that. Speaking of Van Nuys, of course, our first campus was on the Van Nuys . .

Kersey: [Interrupting] It was there because there was a place for it and Van Nuys high school was not growing then. So, we had a high school and a junior college all at the same plant.

Dodson: Now, this particular structure was on the campus over there and moved over here. Isn't that right?

Kersey: None of the bungalows were. Only bungalows.

Dodson: Yes.

Kersey: I think there were seven of them that were transferred from there over here.

Dodson: And that was true of this particular one, was it not?

Kersey: This was one of them. I'm not sure if it was the first one or not, or the dominant one but it was one.

Dodson: We mentioned Mr. Coultas. His title at the time was assistant director, and, I believe, your title was director at that time.

Kersey: I was the director, yes. In fact, all, according to the State Board of Education which had to approve every new junior college in the state at that time, the decision of the State Board was that the person would be not a principal, not a president, but a director. And that the institution was to be a JUNIOR college, not a college, or a community college.

Dodson: Well, we've gotten away from that since then.

Kersey: Oh, I'm afraid we have.

Dodson: And can you tell us a little about Mrs. Royer's background?

Kersey: Well, Mrs. Royer. My first acquaintance with Mrs. Royer she was assistant principal of the high school in the town of Watts where Mr. Davis was the community superintendent there. He was superintendent in the city of Watts. She was there in the high school and she was very successful there. That was, course it wasn't the type of population it is now at all. Because she was adventuresome and because she had armed herself with credentials and so she was available as one, I think she was one the principal's list then and she was very much interested in work when I talked to her at the, we didn't call it junior college, but at the post high school area at that time. She had done some work there at developing some post high school activities in Watts so I thought there was a good opportunity. She was a very desirable person. She was quite, in personal ways, active. She was active in the women's educational groups that were organizing then. The men had organized Phi Beta Kappa and, what is it?, Delta Kappa Gamma, or something. I don't know just what it is. She'd been active in that and that was all good background to come to a new place out here.

Dodson: I think you were very lucky in that Mr. Coultas and Mrs. Royer and yourself were so interested in this college and in making it go. I think that was true of all our first faculty.

Kersey: Oh, it was. It was, yes! We had a good faculty. They were varied people and, sometimes, they a little bit personably anxious to plan all of their own programming instead of becoming a part of what was the structure. The main thing at Valley in those days was to keep it integrated and to keep it as an integral instead of, oh, "why don't we offer courses in, " there's fields that I won't mention that were proposed.

Dodson: Yes. I remember you favored the integration of the faculty very much. You wanted them to have

offices together rather than separately.

Kersey: That was the idea, to be together. And they were. They were very much so. There was a time though, this ought not to be part of the consideration here, when the men were not too favorable to women coming into that level of education. There weren't many women in college at that time.

Dodson: You're right. There's been a great change since then, I would say. Of course, it was easier to integrate them then because we had so few. Now, the room we're recording in was once the room where we had our faculty meetings.

Kersey: Faculty meetings. Very good.

Dodson: All eighteen instructors and the three administrators sat around the same table we're sitting around now, I think.

Kersey: I think that's very true, and they rather enjoyed being together.

Dodson: In fact, many of the old-timers think we've lost something by becoming so big.

Kersey: I think that's true. In fact, I think bigness or size is not always conducive to student body or community contact or community services in the establishment of a new school. First year residents have that problem. Whittier college had that problem of having the faculty small, closely tied together, and with the introduction of women. They also had no women administrators. I think we were the first junior college in this area to have a woman in the office of administration.

Dodson: I think one of the things that you insisted on and spoke very strongly of in the early days was the idea that we were a friendly college. Just what did you mean by that?

Kersey: A friendly college, that's right. Uh, I meant if the students got, sort of togetherness, or unity which, of course, meant bringing students from everywhere around here. We had them from Ventura county. We had a goodly number of them from over in towards the valley out there.

Dodson: The Simi valley?

Kersey: Simi valley. Then, also, we got some from Burbank and some from different sections of the valley that were quite prominently there own communities. The only thing you could emphasize you couldn't pick any other word, as I often thought about it, but a FRIENDLY school. You spoke to everybody and you enjoyed everyone else and they enjoyed us. I think that that was dominant and it didn't take it long to catch on. The press here, the Valley Green Sheet, at that time there were 11 newspapers in the valley. I don't know how many there are now. I know that Mendenhall is just been sold out to change.

Dodson: He's still the editor, I think.

Kersey: Well, that was one of the conditions, that he remain as editor. He's a good friend. A good friend.

Dodson: I think he's been a good friend of this college consistently.

Kersey: And his wife has been a good friend. His present wife. She's a graduate here, now, don't ever forget. I mean, this present wife. I shouldn't have said that.

Dodson: Do you remember her maiden name as a student?

Kersey: No, I don't.

Dodson: I just happen to wonder whether she was someone that, uh, I might have known or have been in one of my classes.

Kersey: I don't know.

Dodson: You been talking about the friendly concept of the college, Dr. Kersey. I can remember when you used to go down and conduct a barbecue down there.

Kersey: That I did. Say, I was commenting to a friend here about Kersey Lake. [laughing] I said that that was one of the landmarks here. I don't suppose you have any recollection of that?

Dodson: In our files we have a picture of one girl being carried across the waters of Kersey Lake. [laughing] That's something Karen missed. Just think, If you'd been here when we'd had flood you might've been carried across the parking lot too, Karen.

Kersey: That's true. I'll tell you though, the water situation and the rains and the winds were factors here. And the crows. Do you remember when we used to have those crows?

Dodson: I think we still have some crows, now and then. Another problem that we had was bees. Do you remember?

Kersey: Yes, Yes.

Dodson: We used to have them around the old Quad. They were here, really, in numbers. In fact, some of our student's got stung now and then, but those are gone completely.

Kersey: They are? Well, maybe. That was an experience.

Dodson: Looking back on your career here at college, Dr. Kersey, what do you think stands out in your memory the most about the college or about your connection with it?

Kersey: Well, I would say, first of all, the friendliness, to the point of lovableness, of the student body. They were just lovely people. They were just people who had a qualification of warmth and it drew you to them. They always spoke to you and they'd stop you and talk to you. If you would stop them you wouldn't have to holler, "hey there, I wanna say something to you." And the same thing is true, uh, we didn't pass up faculty members without a word. Sometimes Prismon would want to talk about the days when he was a minister, but. . .

Dodson: [Interrupting for clarification on the identity of

Prismon] Mr. Don Prismon was one of our instructors in Social Science, particularly in history, and also Veterans counselor. Uh, Karen, I think you had a question.

Sheridan: Dr. Kersey, how big was the student body your first year as director of this college?

Kersey: Well, we started out with fewer than a hundred our first semester. Then we started to grow and, I think, by our third semester we had something of around six hundred. That spirit built this college because, gracious, what the college had otherwise, you might get anywhere else even at private institutions.

Dodson: Karen, as you've been listening to this, do you think you might have liked to have been a student here at that time? Do you think we really did differ much from the colleges you've been at?

Sheridan: I think it would have been a real experience going to a school that had that few people. My high school had six hundred in the graduating class. The high school I attended had six hundred just in my graduating class, so I can remember knowing most of those, or knowing most of those students.

Kersey: Well, I graduated from the second high school in the city of Los Angeles, Polytechnic High School. There were only 70 of us in the graduating class.

Dodson: What year was that Dr. Kersey?

Kersey: Nineteen hundred and eight. When I attended, uh, I've been head of the alumni association for 37 years. We had our annual meeting last saturday.

Dodson: You knew that Polytechnic, now, was in the valley? That they had transferred the name?

Kersey: Yes. Yes.

Dodson: I think the records have been transferred to the valley.

Kersey: Possibly so.

Dodson: Well, at least they kept up the name of that high school.

Kersey: Oh, yes. Well, the people at Trade Tech were never interested in continuing any traditions

of Polytechnic High School. They wanted Trade Technical High School to develop its own traditions. It would have been a good thing to have had the technical school here in the valley.

Dodson: Yes, that's true.

Kersey: It would be even today. It would be very good.

Dodson: Would you like to see another community college developed out here with the Polytechnic trend or the Trade Technical idea?

Kersey: No. I would like to see if, I know nothing about the plan for the development of the school structure here. There must be a plan. I know when I was superintendent we always had a plan for areas in the city and if that plan did not include, or does not include, something of a specialized school, it might even be a commercialized school out here. It might be a special school for different sorts of trades in the field of Engineering or in the field of Real Estate, or in the field of the, so called, new areas of all of this equipment that we would like very much at Coast Federal, where I am now to be able to turn to some school that trained people in the techniques of the equipment that we use in lieu of the personal contacts or customs.

Dodson: We have advanced, in some ways in that way, since you were head of the college.

Kersey: I know. You have a very delicate approach to it

Dodson: Yes. That's a very delicate way of putting it. Of course, in a way, I think that our college has been distinctive in that we have stressed the academic side. The preparation for going on to a four year institution perhaps more than some of the others.

Kersey: Well, don't you think that's good?

Dodson: Yes! I think it's very good.

Kersey: I do too. I think that there's altogether a waning away from or flipping away, whatever you'd call it, from distinct learning of

fundamentals of good educational culture. I don't know where you get culture in education now, do you? At college?

Dodson: Well, I don't know. I think that would be rather controversial. Karen, do you feel that you're picking up some culture in college or that you're cultured in spite of going to college?

Sheridan: Well, just working for the museum I'm personally picking up a lot of culture.

Kersey: That's incidental culture.

Dodson: That was a very nice answer, Karen. If I'd coached you in advance I couldn't have done any better.

Kersey: That was very good. Very good. You know, I see so many people. We meet so many people down where I'm employed now. I'm vice-president at Coast Federal Savings. We have, when I started with them some years ago we had two branches, now we have 34 in 14 years. We didn't develop them quite from the beginning and as you meet new people who are coming there and who want to establish themselves and make that a career, and there isn't any doubt about that, a career in the field of finance and all of its relationships to the new areas of handling funds by machinery or by different instruments, that people don't care whether they know how to spell or don't care whether they know about the culture that comes from studying, really, the literature that comes from educational growth and development.

Dodson: You think that, perhaps, their education is too limited, too restricted to immediate problems of making a living?

Kersey: I, I just feel that their not offered this, that they would like to have it. I don't feel that people are veering away from the old, original program. I think that education has, kind of, grown away from it and who cares!

Dodson: You see any difference in the type of people who are applying for jobs at Coast Federal and the type that you knew here as students?

Kersey: Yes. Yes, I do. I see a great deal of that. There is a lessing of the fundamental maturity on the part of the people who come there. I mean fundamentally, if you wanted to talk about history. We're having a great deal of consideration of history at the present time, with this 200th centennial here. They have no particular approach to that; any knowledge. I don't know, I don't know what I would say they do have in place of it. They are not grounded in these basic patterns of maturity building learning. That's just what I see in them and I talk to a good many of parents of people even that went to school when I was here at Valley. They come in and say, "oh, it's good to see you," and so on and so forth. And they say, "why don't we have these children brought up to do what we used to do and learn?" Course, that's to be expected. I don't think that that's a good thing, always, but I certainly don't see any reason, I see no reason why it should be met with so much aversion. Now, my mother was a Greek scholar and she taught Greek at Hastings College, Nebraska. My father and mother, course, they were Quakers and there's something fundamental in the background of Quakers. Maybe that, just because of that, they seemed mighty special.

Dodson: I think it is true that since you were connected with the community colleges there's been a lessening of requirements, generally.

Kersey: Yes. Oh my, Yes! You can get into college and out of college and onto something else with or without most anything, now.

Dodson: Yes. I've noticed this in the requirements for both the state universities and the state colleges.

Kersey: For credentials, too.

Dodson: And, of course, we've had a grade inflation right along with the monetary inflation. In that it is now much easier to get high grades than it used to be.

Kersey: Well, how do they pick out these Phi Beta Kappas? How did I ever get one if the, ye Gods, they

analyzed me like I was taking some kind of physical examination to pass when I went up for the Phi Beta Kappa.

Dodson: Well, there's so many high grades now that it causes a problem. I think the graduate schools aren't sure who to let in because everybody has high grades. I read that Dickenson College had abolished its Dean's list because everyone was getting on the Dean's list. It didn't mean anything. Course, that's quite different than when you were director here. We didn't have quite that situation.

Kersey: We didn't have to have it because what we thought were better substitutes. So they abolitioned that. You know, this is all, this is all museum talk.

Dodson: You remember, clearly, the eighteen members of your original faculty?

Kersey: I think I could work them out and work who was there, but I couldn't do it readily. Dr. Dodson, you get very far away from alot of this. If you can judge just one thing from our discussion here, you can tell that I have to be pawing or groping for so many things that ought to be prompt responses. And I don't have answers without, sort of, working it over.

Dodson: Two of the original members of your staff are still teaching; Phil Clarke, in mathematics and Mrs. Bearman [sp?] in the library.

Kersey: I understand Mrs. Bearman is going to retire.

Dodson: That could be. I don't know.

Kersey: Whatever it is, I don't know.

Dodson: Those are the only two who are still teaching. Course, I'm still around in relation to the museum but I don't teach except to substitute now and then.

Kersey: Are you on retirement now?

Dodson: Yes.

Kersey: You're retired.

Dodson: That's officially the case, anyway.

Kersey: Well, that's alright. I'm past 65.

Dodson: [laughing] I'm glad you told us, otherwise we might not know that.

Kersey: You wanna know how old I am? Would you like to know?

Sheridan: O.K.

Kersey: I'm 86.

Sheridan: I'm very surprised.

Kersey: You are?

Sheridan: Absolutely.

Dodson: Uh, I was present when Dr. Kersey made his last speech to the faculty and he didn't once mention that he was retiring. He just talked about how he was changing jobs.

Sheridan: Oh.

Kersey: Well, that's true. I have done several things since going away from the college, yes.

Dodson: Could you mention those for us?

Kersey: Well, when I first left here, they, I, I will say these things. I mention them only because I didn't seek any of these. These were things that came to me. I first went to the College of Optometry and I was president of the Los Angeles College of Optometry. There, I stayed, I think four years until I left that college and went to the College of Chiropractic. Those colleges, and also, I went to the College of Osteopathy and they sought me because I was concerned about the curriculum and the balance of offerings. Then, I was concerned about the

manual or instructors materials that they used and the nature of collegiate instruction in those semi-technical fields. Then, I went over to Loyola [sp?] they asked me to come over there and establish their teacher training program for them. Loyola University. That I did for, I don't know how long. I'd have to, sort of, check it out. Then, I became a member of the board of Chapman College. I was there, oh, a long time. It got to the point where going down to Chapman, down at Orange from Los Angeles, at least once a week, and being down there at 8 o'clock, was more than I liked to fight the freeways to do. So, I gave that up. So, then, Mr. Crayo [sp?], because of my, I taught Spanish and I had taken commercial subjects in high school and I write short hand and had done some court reporting, uh, Mr. Crayo asked me if I would go down into Mexico and take some depositions. I had known Crayo because he was active in the L.A. Alumni and I was active in the Poly-technic Alumni and I said, "yes, I would." So, I did that. Then, he said, "I want you to come on our board." I said, "well, I'm very much interested in your interest in me." And I said, "will there be things that I can develop that I can do here?" Because I don't want to come here and talk about how to teach people to be good employee's and that as incidence of my relationship. He said, "no. I want you to come here and come in and study the financial fields." Which I have. Which I enjoy very much, which is very satisfying. Then, he said, after I had made two or three studies and recommendations, he said, "I want you to be vice-president of Coast Federal." So, then I was vice-president. After about seven years of that he passed away. His wife passed away. My wife passed away. But, at any rate, that is the passing of people but I've been there over 20 years now.

Dodson: I knew you were there quite a while.

Kersey: Yes. Over 20 years at Coast Federal and I keep saying to them now, I keep saying, sometime or another I'd like to be just on my own and not have to be down here. Now, I had to be there today and I'll have to be there tomorrow. Why?

Because I won't have a job to do at a desk where I advise people about their finances or about their properties or about their accounts, a man and their wife can wrangle so and separate from one another on those things. I'd like to, after all, I believe in this: I believe never let yourself be dismissed from a job. Dismiss yourself.

Dodson: Then, you're finding that a challenge, in a way, just as you did being here?

Kersey: They won't, and I've talked to them about it, uh, Mr. Blakely, whom I nominated, I nominated Bob Sproul [sp?] to be president of the University of California, but at any rate, I nominated Mr. Blakely. I said, "Ross, I want to begin to look to the period or to the time when I can just say, well now, I've done my responsibilities here and I think I better do something else." I suppose I'll do something else as long as I can come over here and fuss around and take up your time.

Dodson: You haven't taken up our time Dr. Kersey. We're very, very grateful to you for these remarks.

Kersey: I'm gonna go back down to Coast Federal at 9th and Hill, now.

Dodson: I would have never doubted it at all. I was sure that you'd be hurrying back to the office as soon as you left here.

Kersey: They better let me in, too.

Dodson: [laughing] I'm sure they will. Just as long as you want in.

Kersey: I hope so. I hope so. They can easily, I've seen them turn and let other people be excused. In other words, as I told Mr. Blakely, I said, "I always remember what I once heard a fella say when he called in one of his employees." He said, "Mr. So and so, I'm gonna increase your salary a $100.00 dollars next month because I want your last month to be a pleasant one."

Dodson: I don't think that'll ever happen to you Dr. Kersey.

Kersey: Well, I'll think on some of these things. I'll get back to you. By the way, I have that first, you remember that first graduation where they gave me that team of horses and all of that thing?

Dodson: I didn't remember that, no. But I'll be glad to have you refresh my memory.

Kersey: This was a, this was like a bank, uh, like the bank up north.

Dodson: Oh! Wells Fargo.

Kersey: Wells Fargo. I'll see that you have it.

Dodson: Well, fine. We'd appreciate it.

Kersey: It's just something from the college that I'd like to return. I had some other things.

Dodson: Well, thank you very much, Dr. Kersey. We appreciate it.

This has been an interview with Dr. Virling Kersey, first president of Los Angeles Valley College. The interview was conducted by Dr. James L. Dodson, curator of the Los Angeles Valley College Historical Museum and by Mrs. Karen Sheridan, field deputy to Dr. Dodson. The date is Monday, May 24th, 1976.